NCA
VOC FOR IOP/FN
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JOHN BUE/PARIS

GISCARD VISIT PREVIEW

ANNCR:

FRENCH PRESIDENT GISCARD D'ESTAING'S VISIT TO THE UNITED STATES NEXT WEEK WILL BE LARGELY GEARED TO THE CELEBRATION OF THE AMERICAN BI-CENTENNIAL BUT WILL OF COURSE HAVE MAJOR POLITICAL CONNOTATIONS. VOA'S JOHN BUE SENDS THIS BACKGROUND REPORT:

VOICE:

THE FRENCH PRESIDENT AND MISSUS GISCARD D'ESTAING WILL ARRIVE IN WASHINGTON ABOARD THE CONCORDE SUPERSONIC AIRLINER EARLY MONDAY MORNING. THEY WILL BE GREETED AT THE WHITE HOUSE BY MISTER AND MISSUS FORD AND THE TWO PRESIDENTS WILL GET DOWN TO THE FIRST OF TWO TALK SESSIONS WHICH SECRETARY OF STATE KISSINGER SAID WOULD COVER THE WHOLE RANGE OF INTERNATIONAL ISSUES.

DURING THEIR WEEK-LONG STAY, THE FRENCH PRESIDENT AND HIS WIFE WILL ATTEND SEVERAL PICTURESQUE CEREMONIES ILLUSTRATING FRANCE'S ROLE IN THE AMERICAN WAR OF INDEPENDENCE. THESE INCLUDE VISITS TO YORKTOWN, VIRGINIA, THE SITE OF THE BATTLE IN WHICH FRENCH GENERAL LAFAYETTE AND HIS TROOPS JOINED THE FIGHT FOR AMERICAN INDEPENDENCE. AFTER A STOP IN PHILADELPHIA, THE FRENCH PRESIDENTIAL COUPLE ATTEND THE DEDICATION OF A SOUND AND LIGHT SHOW AT MOUNT VERNON, GEORGE WASHINGTON'S HOME. THE SHOW IS FRANCE'S GIFT TO THE AMERICAN PEOPLE FOR THE BI-CENTENNIAL. LATER THE GISCARDS WILL TOUR TEXAS AND LOUISIANA, INCLUDING NEW ORLEANS WITH ITS NUMEROUS DESCENDENTS OF ERSTWHILE FRENCH SETTLERS.

AT THE END OF THE TOUR, AFTER HER HUSBAND'S DEPARTURE EN ROUTE TO PARIS, MISSUS GISCARD D'ESTAING WILL REMAIN BEHIND TO CHRISTEN A BRAND NEW AMERICAN NAVAL DESTROYER NAMED "LE COMTE DE GRASSE". HERE AGAIN ARE TWO HUNDRED YEAR-OLD MEMORIES. WHAT LAFAYETTE DID AT YORKTOWN, FRENCH ADMIRAL DE GRASSE ACHIEVED AT SEA BY BLOCKADING THE POWERFUL BRITISH FLEET IN THE APPROACHES TO CHESAPEAKE BAY.

DURING HIS STAY, THE FRENCH PRESIDENT ADDRESSES THE AMERICAN CONGRESS IN FULL SESSION AND MEETS THE PRESS ON TWO OCCASIONS. HE HAS MADE CLEAR IN INTERVIEWS WITH THE AMERICAN PRESS THAT HE WILL TRY TO MEND THE IMAGE OF FRENCH OFFICIAL UNFRIENDLINESS TOWARD AMERICA, LARGELY A HANGOVER FROM THE DAYS OF FORMER PRESIDENT DE GAULLE. WHILE REMAINING CAUTIOUS IN HIS FORMULATIONS BECAUSE OF GAULLIST AND LEFTIST DOMESTIC PRESSURES, PRESIDENT GISCARD D'ESTAING HAS DURING THE PAST TWO YEARS STEERED HIS COUNTRY ON A COURSE WHICH PROMPTED DOCTOR KISSINGER TO TELL REPORTERS LAST WEEK THAT FRANCO-AMERICAN RELATIONS HAVE NEVER BEEN BETTER.

GH/RK/RCS